APPENDIX 6

Visual Resource Management

Visual resource management is the system by which the BLM classifies and manages scenic values and visual quality of public lands. The system is based on research that has produced ways of assessing the natural attributes of the landscape in objective terms. After inventory and evaluation, lands are given visual ratings (management classes), which determine the amount of modification allowed to the basic elements of the landscape.

Inventory and Evaluation of Visual Resource Management

The visual resource inventory process (BLM Handbook 8410-1) provides BLM managers with a means for determining visual values. The inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation, sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance zones. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four visual resource inventory classes. These inventory classes represent the relative value of the visual resource.

Visual Resource Management Classes

Visual resource management classes represent the degree of acceptable visual change within a characteristic landscape. A class is based on the physical and sociological characteristics of any given homogeneous area and serves as a management objective. The four classes are described below:

Class I
- preserve the existing character of the landscape
- does not preclude very limited management activity
- level of change to the characteristic landscape should be extremely low and must not attract attention

Class II
- retain the existing character of the landscape
- management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer

Class III
- partially retain the existing character of the landscape
- areas where changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, or texture) caused by a management activity should not dominate the view of the casual observer
- changes to the landscape may attract attention but may not dominate the landscape.

Class IV
- Provide for the management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape
- Changes may be dominant landscape components

Rehabilitation Area Objective

Areas in need of rehabilitation should be flagged during the inventory process. The level of rehabilitation will be determined through the RMP process by assigning the VRM class approved for that particular area.